

University Avenue Central Corridor Task Force
September 28, 2006
Goodwill Industries, Boardroom
Meeting Summary

Task Force members present: Reggie Aligada (co-chair), Veronica Burt, Betty Charles, James Erkel, Joan Grzywinski, Courtney Henry, Richard Kleinbaum, Juan Linares, Nieeta Presley, Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Robert Straughn, Mai Thor, Bao Vang, Anne White

Task Force members absent: Julie Causey (co-chair), Vatou Her, Seitu Jones, Bryon Moore, Brian Winkelaar

Staff present: Christina Danico, Melvin Carter, Donna Drummond, Shawntera Hardy, Vaughn Megn Thoj, Sarah Zorn, Allen Lovejoy

Others present: Arlene McCarthy, Steve Dornfield, Mark Fuhrmann, Peter Bell, Tim Griffin, Jack Becker, Karen Lyons, Jane McClure, Brian Alton, Russ Stark, Sarah Penman, Maisha Giles, Barb Thoman, Jo Haberman, Randy Schubring, Mark Voerding, and Sam Buffington

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Reggie Aligada. Reggie welcomed everyone and briefly reviewed the agenda for the day and approved the meeting notes from the September 14, 2006 meeting.

Reggie then asked all in attendance to introduce themselves, including audience members. Reggie broke the unfortunate news of his resignation from the Saint Paul Planning Commission due to ethical requirements laid out by his new position.

Reggie then introduced Peter Bell, Chair of the Metropolitan Council as the first presenter. Peter provided a presentation on the status and next steps of the Central Corridor Light Rail (LRT) project. He started with the following recent timeline of the project (Peter stated that goal of the stated timeline is to “under promise but over overproduce”):

- June 2006 – Draft New Starts application was sent to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for permission to enter into Preliminary Engineering (PE)
- June – Present – The Metropolitan Council is working with the FTA to finalize the application
- October – The Metropolitan Council will submit the final application to the FTA
- End of Year – The Metropolitan Council anticipates approval from the FTA to enter into PE
- Late 2006 – PE will be commence
- Late 2008 – Final Design (FD) will commence
- Late 2009 – Full Funding Grant will be negotiated
- 2010 – 2013 – Construction
- Early 2014 – Revenue Operations

After discussing the timeline, Peter highlighted a few key facts about the project including: PE is proposed to be a two year process beginning in 2007 (PE will involve finalizing the project scope, project budget, funding plan and deciding how the project will be built

(design-build or design-bid-build)); the cost of the project which is currently \$930 million may be too high and also underestimated; all components of the project must meet the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI) in order to get federal funding; alignment will not be revisited; and the project has many partners.

Peter concluded his presentation with a discussion of the importance of the taskforce work and how it will supplement the work of the Metropolitan Council. Arlene McCarthy, Director of Transportation Services, and Mark Furhmann, Deputy General Manager of Metro Transit, both echoed the importance of the City's help with the land use section of the New Starts Application which was compiled by Karen Lyons of the Met Council staff. Peter then opened up the meeting to questions and comments.

Most of the questions and comments focused on: the impact on MVST or Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (Peter responded that MVST is volatile but voting yes on this fall's proposed constitutional amendment is imperative to transportation investment); the need to provide technical assistance in impacted areas and environmental justice (Peter responded "at what price?" He made the point that all items considered may impact the CEI which in turn may halt the project); the consideration of community benefits agreements (Peter responded that the Metropolitan Council has not analyzed community benefits agreements to date). However, the Council is working to ensure that all interested parties have a say in the project, and creating mechanisms to help small businesses during construction (Peter responded that there are no strategies as of yet, however, the Council is discussing how to tackle this issue).

Tim Griffin, Director of the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Design Center, provided a presentation on the American Institute of Architects (AIA) 150th Anniversary activities. Tim stated that each chapter is doing a technical program in their community. The St. Paul chapter is working on a program that will offer design charrettes to look at design and density in the Corridor on a block by block basis. Tim concluded with a presentation with an overview of the topics discussed in the AIA Livability 101 book and the AIA 10 Principles for Livable Communities: Design on a Human Scale; Provide Choices; Encourage Mixed Use Development; Preserve Urban Centers; Transportation Options; Build Vibrant Public Spaces; Create Neighborhood Identity; Protect Environmental Resources, Conserve Landscapes; and Design Matters. For more information on AIA visit www.aia.org/livable.

Jack Becker, Forecast Public Artworks, provided a presentation on the importance of public art in transportation projects. Jack displayed a slide show of how public art has been incorporated in transit projects throughout the country. He emphasized the importance of having artists on board with the project at the very beginning. He concluded with an overview, both pros and cons, of the work that he was involved with on the Hiawatha line.

The task force meeting concluded with a brief discussion of the task force reactions to the open house panels, what they have heard thus far, and ideas they want to explore further. These included:

- idea of community benefits agreements - is that a way for the community to get the benefits it wants from both the LRT project and related development projects?
- parking issues - park and hide especially

- options for finding resources for things the community wants in order to get around the cost constraints of the project
- how other communities have captured the benefits from LRT (in the context of benefiting existing low-income/minority communities)
- pedestrian safety, on the corridor and from the neighborhoods
- 3D example of what could be built under current B2 or B3 zoning and parking requirements (30 ft. height limit and high retail parking requirements) versus what could be built under TN zoning on the same parcel
- example of what affordable housing could look like (that it can look nice)

Staff stated that next meeting would be devoted to only task force discussion of issues that have been presented thus far.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Meeting summary prepared by Shawntera Hardy, PED planning staff.